

## Message Text

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SUBJECT: BELGIAN ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRY POPULATION AND  
FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS

REF: STATE 58729

1. SUMMARY: THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT DEVOTES A VERY SMALL PART OF ITS OFFICIAL AID TO POPULATION ACTIVITIES. THE GENERAL PUBLIC ATTITUDE HERE IN THIS AREA IS INDIFFERENCE -- BUT OPPOSITION COULD DEVELOP OF POPULATION PROGRAMS BECAME MARKEDLY MORE IMPORTANT. PRESENT POPULATION ASSISTANCE IS DIRECTED MOSTLY THROUGH MULTILATERAL CHANNELS. THE ONLY COMPREHENSIVE BILATERAL PROGRAM IS IN TUNISIA. BELGIANS SEE A NEED FOR BETTER DONOR COORDINATION IN POPULATION EFFORTS. THE BELGIAN EFFORT ITSELF, HOWEVER, IS UNLIKELY TO GROW IN RELATION TO ITS OVERALL AID PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REQUESTED REFTEL, WE HAVE REVIEWED THE PRESENT STATUS OF OFFICIAL BELGIAN POPULATION PROGRAMS IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITH JEAN-PAUL GOYENS. DIRECTOR OF THE ADMINISTRATION GENERALE DE LA COOPERATION AU DEVELOPPEMENT. (THE RESPONSIBLE BELGIAN OFFICIAL FOR UNCLASSIFIED

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POPULATION IS GOYENS'S SUBORDINATE, DR. KIVITS, CHIEF OF

THE ADMINISTRATION'S PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION.) GOYENS PROVIDED RECENT YEAR FIGURES FOR BELGIAN OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AS FOLLOWS (MILLIONS OF BF):

	ODA	OF WHICH POPULATION (EST)
1973	9,165	N/A
1974	10,559	25.5
1975	13,852	38.2
1976 (EST.)	15,908	42.0

3. GOYENS SAID THAT HIS OFFICE HAS NOT MADE FUTURE PROJECTIONS FOR POPULATION PROGRAMS. HE SAID THAT, DESPITE THE FACT THAT BELGIUM HAS A HEAVILY CATHOLIC POPULATION, THE GENERAL PUBLIC ATTITUDE HERE TOWARDS POPULATION PROGRAMS (AND, IN FACT, TOWARDS FOREIGN AID GENERALLY) IS ONE OF INDIFFERENCE. (SUPPORT FOR AID DERIVES RATHER FROM SMALL BUT ACTIVE PRESSURE GROUPS AND A FEW POWERFUL, WELL-PLACED POLITICIANS.) WE INFER FROM HIS REMARKS THAT OPPOSITION COULD DEVELOP. HOWEVER, IF POPULATION PROGRAMS BECAME MARKEDLY MORE IMPORTANT RELATIVE TO THE OVERALL BELGIAN AID EFFORT. THE PERCENTAGE OF BELGIAN FOREIGN AID DEVOTED TO POPULATION IN THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS CAN THUS BE EXPECTED TO REMAIN MORE OR LESS CONSTANT.

4. BELGIAN POPULATION ASSISTANCE IS DIRECTED THROUGH BOTH MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL CHANNELS. THE ADMINISTERING AGENCY FOR MULTILATERAL AID IS THE UNITED NATIONS FAMILY PLANNING AGENCY (UNFPA) WHICH EARMARKS 10 PERCENT OF THE MONEY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FOUNDATION (IPPF). BELGIUM'S MULTILATERAL PARTICIPATION IN 1974 WAS US DOLS 565,000 ABOUT 85 PERCENT OF ITS TOTAL EFFORT IN POPULATION ASSISTANCE THAT YEAR. WE DO NOT HAVE DETAILED FIGURES FOR 1975-76, BUT BELIEVE THAT THE PROPORTIONS REMAIN ABOUT THE SAME.

5. BELGIUM'S ONLY BILATERAL PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE POPULATION ASSISTANCE IS IN TUNISIA. THIS IS A 6-YEAR US DOLS 1 MILLION PROGRAM BEGUN IN 1975. IT INCLUDES PUBLIC HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING AND DEMOGRAPHIC PLANNING ASPECTS. IT IS COMPLETELY RUN BY A CONTRACTOR, THE UNCLASSIFIED

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FREE UNIVERSITY OF BRUSSELS, WITH NO PROGRAM SURVEILLANCE BY THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT. OTHERWISE, BELGIUM'S ONLY POPULATION WORK IS AS A MINOR AND VERY DISCREET ADJUNCT TO MOTHER AND CHILD CARE SERVICES IN ZAIRE AND BURUNDI. EFFORTS TO INTRODUCE EVEN THIS MODEST APPROACH IN RWANDA HAVE BEEN UNAVAILING. GOYENS POINTED OUT THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THESE THREE COUNTRIES PLACES A CERTAIN DE FACTO LIMITATION ON WHAT BELGIUM CAN DO IN POPULATION

BILATERALLY,GIVEN THE LARGE SHARE OF TOTAL AID RESOURCES  
BELGIUM TRADITIONALLY DEVOTES TO ITS FORMER COLONIES.

6. CONCERNNG DONOR CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION  
GOYENS SAID BELGIUM BELIEVES IT COULD BE BETTER THE  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS FAMILY  
PLANNING AGENCY SHOULD DO MORE TO COORDINATE DONORS'  
EFFORTS WORLDWIDE. IN TUNISIA,THE UNITED NATIONS FAMILY PLANNING  
AGENCY HAS IGNORED BELGIAN EFFORTS TO HARMONIZE THEIR  
RESPECTIVE PROGRAMS THERE,ACCORDING TO GOYENS. HE SAID DONORS  
GIVING POPULATION  
ASSISTANCE BILATERALLY COLD ALSO IMPROVE THEIR COUNTRY  
COORDINATION IN SOME CASESALTHOUGH HOST SENSITIVITIES  
MIGHT SOMETIMES MAKE THIS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

7. GOYENS SAID BELGIUM'S EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN THAT  
BILATERAL POPULATION PROGRAMS ARE INVARIABLY MORE COST-  
EFFECTIVE,MORE FLEXIBLE,MORE RAPID,AND MORE ATTUNED  
TO HOST COUNTRY SENSITIVITIES THAN THOSE WHICH ARE  
MULTILATERAL. THE MULTILATERALS HAVE THE ONE BIG  
ADVANTAGE OF BEING OFTEN MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE  
RECIPIENT COUNTRY,HOWEVER.

8. GOYENS TOOK ISSUE WITH THE ASSUMPTIONS OF PARA 3 (I)  
OF THE REFTEL AS APPLIED TO BELGIUM. BELGIAN AID  
PERFORMANCE WAS 0.59 PERCENT/GNP IN 1975,UP FROM  
0.51 PERCENT IN 1974. THE FORECAST FOR 1976 IS  
0.61 PERCENT. DESPITE SEVERE PRESSURES ON THE NATIONAL  
BUDGET,GOYENS BELIEVES THAT BELGIAN PERFORMANCE WILL  
CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND EXCEED 0.70 PERCENT/GNP BY 1980.  
FOR THIS AND OTHER REASONS MENTIONED,BELGIUM IS NOT  
CONSIDERING ANY SHIFT OF FOREIGN AID RESOURCES TO  
POPULATION. THE DIFFICULTY IS IN PART CONCEPTUAL;  
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GOYENS SAID THAT BELGIUM DOES NOT REGARD DEMOGRAPHY AS  
A SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT ISSUE IT RATHER CONSIDERS IT  
AS PART OF THE GENERA PROBLEM OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
MEDICINE AND BELIEVES IT SHOULD BE DEALT WIT ON THESE  
BROADER TERMS.  
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